

What is International Prenatal Infection Month?

This is a time for parents-to-be to learn about diseases that can be potentially fatal to unborn children.

What are some infections that can cause serious health problems your fetus and newborns?

Zika virus: This can be passed from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby during pregnancy or around the time of birth. Zika virus infection during pregnancy is a cause of *microcephaly* (an abnormally small head) and has been linked to other pregnancy problems and serious birth defects, including miscarriage, stillbirth, eye defects, hearing loss, and impaired growth. Zika is primarily spread through the bite of an infected mosquito. However, Zika can also be spread during sex by a person infected with Zika to his or her sex partners.

Group B Strep: About 1 in 4 women in the U.S. carry the bacteria that cause group B strep infection. Babies can get very sick and even die if their mothers pass group B strep bacteria to them during childbirth. Babies can get very sick and even die if their mothers pass group B strep bacteria to them during childbirth. If you are pregnant and test positive for group B strep, doctors can give you an antibiotic during labor that prevents the bacteria from spreading to your baby. That's why it's so important for you to get tested for group B strep each time you get pregnant.

Cytomegalovirus (CMV): Most babies born with CMV infection will be fine and will not have symptoms or develop health problems. However, some babies will have permanent problems, such as hearing or vision loss or intellectual disabilities at birth. Or they may develop problems later on. CMV is passed from infected people to others through body fluids, such as saliva, urine, blood, vaginal secretions, and semen. For pregnant women, the two most common ways they are exposed to CMV is through contact with saliva and urine of children with CMV infection and through sex.

Listeriosis: This rare but serious infection is caused by eating food contaminated with *Listeria* bacteria. Listeriosis mostly affects pregnant women, newborns, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems. Pregnant women are 10 times more likely than other people to get listeriosis. Pregnant women typically experience only fever and other flu-like symptoms, such as fatigue and muscle aches. However, infections during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, or life-threatening infection of the newborn.

Apps for your smartphone

- [MommyMeds](#)
- [Safe Delivery – iPhone](#)
- [Safe Delivery – Google Play](#)
- [What to Expect](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Mark Epstein, MD**, NMHC's Chief Medical Officer. If you're pregnant or planning a pregnancy, there are simple steps you can take to protect your fetus or newborn from infections that cause serious health problems.

1. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water.
2. Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and foods made from it.
3. Do not change dirty cat litter.
4. Stay away from wild or pet rodents and their droppings.
5. Get tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
6. Talk with your healthcare provider about vaccinations (shots).
7. Avoid people with infection.

Find additional pregnancy resources on our website: mynmhc.org/moms-to-be-pregnancy-resources.aspx.

Additional resources

- [National Institute of Child Health and Human Development](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)